

2016 Legislative Report

Unfinished business...

It is difficult to accomplish everything you want to get done in a session, especially a 60-day session. A few issues I will continue working on we couldn't get through the legislative process this year:

School safety legislation: In response to school shootings in our state and around the country, I am working on passing legislation that would focus on preventing school violence by training students on what to look for on social media. The legislation would also set up an anonymous reporting system to a teacher or administrator. The bill is modeled after Colorado legislation developed following the 1999 Columbine shooting.



Academic Bill of Rights: Almost daily, I come across a story about the trampling of free speech on college campuses. I have been working on legislation to prevent the infringement on students' free speech rights. A public hearing was held on my bill this year in the House Higher Education Committee. However, I will be working to fine-tune the legislation this interim.

PILT rates for counties: During budget debate I pushed for an amendment to increase payment in lieu of taxes (PILT) rates to Kittitas and other counties owed tax money by the state Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW). PILT is paid to local governments by DFW to help offset losses in property taxes due to non-taxable or state lands in their boundaries. Kittitas County has more than 173,000 acres in the state PILT program.

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2016 Legislative Report

to the 13th District

State Representative
Matt Manweller

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2016 Legislative Report



State Representative
Matt Manweller

13th Legislative District

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The Legislature has adjourned for the year, and I wanted to give you a brief update on this year's highs and lows. In short, I am happy to report we passed a supplemental budget without any new taxes, preserved the "rainy day" for future emergencies, paid for all the devastating forest fires that hit the state last year and provided a little extra money for our state patrol officers, K-12 education system and mental health facilities. On top of all that, we saved every charter school in the state despite a ruling by the Washington Supreme Court! Although I did not win every battle, overall I am pleased we fixed some serious problems while still living within our means.

I will share some of the successes and disappointments in this newsletter. I hope you find it informative.

It is an honor to serve you in the Legislature.

Sincerely,

Matt Manweller



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Supplemental operating budget

The priorities of House Republicans in the short session were to pass a supplemental operating budget that:

- protected the rainy day fund from non-emergency spending;
- did NOT rely on tax increases;
- did NOT rely on budget gimmicks; and
- complied with our state's four-year budget outlook.

We were able to hold the line and accomplish each of these budget priorities. Why the special session? House Democrats were negotiating with money they didn't have. They were relying on tax increases in which they did not have the 50 votes to pass. They also wanted to ignore the four-year budget outlook and proposed spending money out of the state's rainy day fund.

2015-17 operating budget

Last year, the biennial operating budget we passed was historic on many levels. Our spending plan:

- invested an additional \$1.3 billion in K-12 education, the state's largest education budget in history;
- reduced class sizes in grades K-3;
- provided a cost-of-living raise for teachers and state employees;
- reduced the cost of tuition at the state's four-year colleges and universities and two-year community colleges, the first ever tuition cut;
- made significant investments in treatment and capacity for our mentally ill and preserved our health and human services safety net;
- increased funding for state parks; and
- accomplished these things **without major tax increases** - capital gains, carbon, cap and trade and most B&O tax proposals were taken off the table.

Governor vetoes 27 bills

The governor was not helpful in the budget negotiations. The last week of the regular session, he threatened to veto legislation unless we could reach agreement by March 10. When an agreement was not reached, he vetoed 27 bills that had broad bipartisan support. The governor's actions were unnecessary and did not help budget negotiations. Legislation he vetoed included:

- assisting the state Apple Commission to help promote the apple industry;
- removing obstacles for higher education students with disabilities;
- promoting economic development;
- creating jobs by authorizing the growing of industrial hemp;
- reauthorizing the Invasive Species Council account; and
- reducing the costs of prescription drugs.

It is disappointing he chose this veto action instead of being proactive in reaching a budget solution. However, in historic fashion, on the last day of the special session, the House and Senate voted to override all 27 of the governor's vetoes. Only a handful of vetoes have ever been overridden.

13th District capital budget projects

This year's supplemental capital budget included \$400,000 for the restoration of the Ellensburg Train Depot and \$40 million for K-3 class-size reduction and all-day kindergarten. Last year's capital spending plan secured funding for the Harrington Opera House so it would be in compliance with ADA laws. Central Washington University also received much-needed capital budget funding for:

- Samuelson Building (\$56 million);
- Bouillon Hall renovation (\$4.9 million);
- New building for our ROTC students (\$4.9 million);
- Brooks Library Learning Commons (\$4.9 million);
- Old heat - Plant Annex (\$4.9 million);
- Nutrition Science (\$4.3 million); and
- Preventive maintenance and building system repairs (\$2.4 million).



Rail lines

Last session, my **House Bill 1586** was signed into law. This transferred the Royal Slope railroad right-of-way from the Washington State Department of Transportation to the Port of Royal Slope – expanding our rail system and hopefully increasing business and economic development in the Royal City area.



We were able to get about \$21 million for the Port of Moses Lake to reconnect to industrial rail lines for the first time in almost 30 years. This is important for future economic growth in Moses Lake and at the Grant County International Airport.

Preserving our historic cemeteries

I sponsored **House Bill 2637** in an effort to address our decaying and abandoned cemeteries. The bill was signed into law and creates a state historic cemetery capital grant program in the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation.

Clarifying the real estate excise tax (REET) exemption

I was a co-sponsor of legislation passed that clarifies the real estate excise tax (REET) exemption. The bill was necessary to provide some clarification on how the REET exemption is being applied by local governments, including Grant County.

